



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**PROOF**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Suicide**

**SPEECH**

**Tuesday, 16 June 2009**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Sidebottom, Sid, MP

**Source** House  
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**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Mr SIDEBOTTOM** (Braddon) (8.44 pm)—I rise tonight to speak about two programs aimed at both preventing, and assisting in the aftermath of, suicide in our community. We all know of the devastating impact a death by suicide has, particularly when it is a young person. I would like to commend the efforts in prevention by the OzHelp Foundation in Tasmania. I very recently met with OzHelp Chairman Royce Fairbrother, who some members may remember was the inaugural winner of the minister for employment's award for commitment to Australian apprentices last year through his building company, Fairbrother Building Contractors. The company has employed hundreds of apprentices over its history, particularly in my region. Royce told me about OzHelp, a program which he has been passionately involved in and which he hopes to see continue well into the future.

OzHelp is a work based suicide prevention, early intervention and social-capacity-building program that began in 2007 as a response to the disturbing incidence of suicide in my home state of Tasmania. The OzHelp program actually began here in the ACT in 2001, following the tragic deaths of three apprentices in the building industry. Research showed that suicide mortality rates in the building and construction industry were an alarming 75 per cent higher than the Australian male rates. Driven by the knowledge that suicide was a serious problem in Tasmania, key players in the building industry identified the merits of OzHelp in 2006 and in the following year the Tasmanian chapter was born.

The OzHelp program is a proactive workplace suicide prevention service that builds individual resilience, increases help-seeking behaviour and bridges the gap between those at risk and the existing professional services available to them. Rather than reinventing the wheel, OzHelp works collaboratively with all stakeholders, including general community health services, related non-government services, apprenticeship training organisations, drug and alcohol groups and many more. In Tasmania it has been warmly welcomed and is now up and running, with strong support from within the building industry. It has been so successful and the model developed is so well regarded that another iconic Tasmanian business, the Federal Group of hotels, and others have moved to join

in a pilot to extend the service delivery model to three other sectors.

In its first 18 months in operation, the foundation provided training to more than 460 clients, which included apprentices and employees across the state. The OzHelp team also delivered 22 industry and workplace suicide awareness presentations to 450 clients and more than 1,200 hours of direct and indirect client support to an average of 22 clients a month. In a survey of 21 employers conducted externally by the University of Tasmania's University Department of Rural Health, 38 per cent reported health gains in the workplace, 48 per cent indicated economic gains in the workplace, 72 per cent indicated social gains in the workplace and 100 per cent indicated that they would recommend the partnership to others. Overall, employers were unanimously in support of the program. Feedback from the many apprentices who have taken part in the training has also been very positive, which I believe is a very telling factor. OzHelp is a great way to avoid the tragedy of suicide, and I would recommend that anyone who can find out more and does what they can to support it.

Unfortunately, we must also prepare to respond when the preventative means such as OzHelp are not enough and someone does take their life. That is where groups such as StandBy come in. I am pleased to see the StandBy Response Service being expanded by Choose Life Services into the north-west and north of Tasmania and funded by the Australian government Department of Health and Ageing. StandBy is a coordinated, community based response to assist families, friends and associates who have been bereaved through a suicide. It was first established on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland in 2002 and provides a flexible response to cases of suicide, whether they are local or in another location, affecting local people. They can also respond to schools, workplaces, community groups and other areas where bereavement has had an impact. The response from StandBy can be immediate or a follow-up at invitation, depending on the needs of the people involved. It begins with those from the emergency services who first respond to a situation and then goes to those who are impacted by the death.

What makes StandBy work well is collaboration. It involves a mix of local, state and federal government

and non-government services to provide a community based response to suicide. This is a community problem, and StandBy is an important part of the community response. I wish the regional coordinator, Wendy French, every best wish in rolling out this invaluable service. (*Time expired*)